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Sarah Manguso

TWO VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY STEVENS

First there is the thing and then there is
the account of the thing, bent into new
alphabets. Living your life twice is no feat.
Or there is what happens to you, as if
to you only, the yes of no comparison,
until finally, or secretly, the yes
repeats. So a vine with grapes enough
to persuade it to the ground may be a line
with one grape repeated. All love's sighs
are this, simply: an inhalation, an
exhalation, something in between that
is imagined. The final word is the first word
reiterated with gray hair.

Much like mine, your delight.
No discrete evidence of the new
is invented. For the other suns are
our sun surrounded similarly and not seen
together. Some uncertain planet is
what one wants it to be, until found,
when it is the earth. The documents
of genius are nightmares with the sentences
rearranged. Your aspirations
to magnificence are already done
and recorded as the memoirs of sad kings.